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REMINISCENCES OF 70 YEARS AGO

By Henry Atherton

Salem, Indiana, 1921

[Owned in the 1960s by the Washington County Historical Society, Salem, IN]

[Copied in the 1960s for the collection of the Allen County Public Library
under the direction of Fred J. Reynolds]

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No 72
Part II of

Reminiscences of 70 years ago

In the spring of 1851 I came with my parents from Wilmington, Delaware to the State of Ind, and all the travel we did on cars was a part of the way across Pa. the rest of the way to Pittsburg was by canal boat. Where the canal made much of circuit the passengers would land and cut across. From Pittsburg we went to New Albany on a steam boat. At all the river towns at that time, the steamboats were parked along the levies very much as Automobiles are now on the streets They had their tricks of the trade too, they knew that passengers were anxious to go as soon as possible so they would have up steam

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apparently just ready to start & the unsuspecting passengers would hurry on board and very probably they would not start for a day or two. or after they got all the freight and passengers they wanted. That was a much cheaper and more pleasant way of travel than by rail though not as speedy they always had a plentiful supply of good food & a good place to sleep and no extra charge for either. When we got to New Albany we found they were building a R.R. road to Salem but there was no travel on it yet, so we finished the last part of our journey in Mr. Denny's peddler wagon. Our destination was Charles Brooks a brother of my mothers whose home was on the Cole's ferry road 3½

Northwest of Salem. My father had
rented the Enoch Davis farm on
Kings Creek. The Scotland
Methodist Church is on this land
now. The East line. The farm was
overrun with bushes & briars and
the house a double log with rock
chimneys between the two was very
much out of repair as the outlook
was of little inviting. The neighbors
at that time were Thomas Nixon
and the Hill saw mill on the
East James Thomas & Thomas
Morris on the North Dr Joshua
Sturdivant & his brother Nathan on
the West & Adam Cauble on the
South. Henry & Hiram Payne
were neighbors to the Northwest
and Abram Burdy on the South
At this time a large part of
Washington County was covered with

dense Forests. There was one exceptionally heavy piece of timber along the road as we went to Salem called the Blankenbaker tract covered with large Poplar & Oak Trees. The era of Plank roads struck the country about this time and all this beautiful timber with very much more was sawed into plank and put on the road between Salem & the Muscatatuck river. The plank road was a very short lived road and all that valuable timber was in a manner wasted. Robert Maben & A. Benton Davis bought the land cleared it and established homes there. Along about this time there was a great quantity of land cleared in Washington Co & every spring almost every

farmer would have a log rolling where quantities of good saw timber was piled and burned. On those days, too, wood was the principal fuel and there were men who spent the greater part of their time supplying the towns with wood but the price of wood was low and the roads were rough and it was said that a man with a family to keep could take a good team & a new wagon & wear them out hauling wood to town and not have enough left to buy another outfit.

At this time the engines on the rail Roads burned wood and you could see long ricks of cord wood all along the rail road and men sawing it by horse power on circular saws. Their taking

on fuel would be a novelty now.
When the train would stop all the car hands and some of the passengers would get out and throw wood till the tender was full. Then the engines were small affairs to what they are now. They were also named instead of numbered as now. Remember one especially, Attila.

People were more social than now except with their quilting bees, chippings, huskings and quiltings they were brought more into contact. In those times very few farmers had anything to ride in but the farm wagon. When farmers met each other in the road they stop and have quite a little chat. After a time carriages & buggies came into use then they would stop and talk occasionally but

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not so frequently Now
Autos have come into general
use nobody thinks of stopping.
It seems as though the faster
we travel the less time we have.

Henry Atherton
85 years & 8 mo
This 24th of Sep 1921

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